

# ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** December 10, 2015

**Agenda Item:** Beaverhead and Big Hole River Recreation Rules

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Proposed

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 Minutes

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## **Background**

The Beaverhead and Big Hole river recreation rules were established in 1999 to address concerns about crowding on these two rivers. In 2005, the Commission inserted language stating it would review the rules again every five years, hence the current review process.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results**

FWP conducted two public scoping meetings on Oct. 21-22. The meetings, conducted in Dillon and in Butte, served to gather public opinion on the effectiveness of the Big Hole and Beaverhead Rules. Members of the public unable to attend one of the meetings were encouraged to submit written comments. Forty individuals were in attendance at the scoping meetings and 21 written comments were received. Most comments indicated that no changes should be made to the current Big Hole and Beaverhead Rules. Changes that were suggested included: opening of the river reaches currently closed to commercial float fishing; changing rules to allow commercial outfitters to lease their allocated days to other permitted outfitters; allowing outfitters to sell off a portion of their allocated days rather than selling the entire business permit; changing the allocation strategies of temporary client days and prevent outfitters that sell their Big Hole and Beaverhead business permits from applying for temporary client days; changing float restrictions on Beaverhead to allow more than three boats below Henneberry FAS; and terminating the five-year review process.

## **Alternatives and Analysis**

1. No Action - retain the current rules. This would appeal to people who believe the rules are working well and do not want to see any changes. This alternative would not address the requested changes to the rules.
2. Propose amendments to the rules. The extent of the proposed changes would likely influence how people react. Significant changes would likely generate considerable objection from the majority of the people who believe the rules are working well. Minor changes might be more acceptable and appeal to those who want some changes made.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends that no changes be made to the Big Hole and Beaverhead River Recreation Rules. Public scoping conducted in 2015 supports this recommendation as the majority of respondents indicated that no change to the existing permanent rules is preferred. These rules have been successful in mediating user conflict and have served the purpose and intent for which they were developed by the Big Hole/Beaverhead Citizens Advisory Committee.

## **Proposed Motion**

I move that the Commission approve FWP's recommendation that no changes be made to the Big Hole and Beaverhead Rules and direct FWP to offer that recommendation for public comment.